

Bruce was the one who got away. We met when we were both 17. I will never forget him as long as I have breath. He was my first love, and I was his. Our love affair consumed the entire duration of my college years and concluded when I moved to Florida for an internship. I still live in Florida. He, unfortunately, does not.

Bruce and I met in South Green #1 at Ohio University. A brand new dorm on a brand new green with brand new rules. Those rules consisted of males and females in the same building and no curfews. So, no rules would be a more fitting description. My parents would have come to campus and removed me forcefully had they understood this lack of rules. As it turns out, they did not.

We bonded over music: listening to Chicago Transit Authority and Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young vinyls. I would sit on the floor of his room and listen to his music. It soon became my music and he became my boyfriend, although I already had a boyfriend back home. By the time James Taylor performed the Homecoming concert in October, I had narrowed it down to just one boyfriend, Bruce. He didn't have a girlfriend back home so we became an official couple.

I loved everything about this boy: his jet black hair, perfect teeth, amazing intellect, and slightly pudgy figure. Bruce reminded me of my dad. I also loved that Bruce was in the marching band. On my college campus the marching band was and still is a very big deal. Fans of the football team come to the games to walk and talk while the team tries to score; at half time everyone returns to their seats to watch the band. Because of my interest in Bruce I became a band groupie. The groupies sat in a special section right behind the band. Life was so good.

Time spent together became so precious. We quickly merged our friend groups at mealtime and we started hanging out with older, more established couples. We both had very labor-intensive majors, requiring long hours in libraries or labs or practice rooms. As our first two years of college passed we each got our own apartments. He taught me how to cook. Without Bruce I would have subsisted on carry-out pizza and Ramen noodles.

We met each other's families and began to travel back and forth during school vacations. Long distance calls were terribly expensive so we wrote letters. One Christmas vacation he took me from his Jersey home into New York City on the train. We ate steak at a fancy restaurant and saw a Broadway show. We felt so adultish sitting in window seats of the steakhouse watching the world walk by! I adored New York City and I adored Bruce. If there had been a wedding chapel in NYC I would have eloped with him right then.

When we were both 19, Bruce placed a diamond on the fourth finger of my left hand. As he was somewhat of a child genius - or maybe he was a child genius - he earned his computer science degree in three years. He chose to remain on campus, working as a TA and studying for his master's degree. I was in my senior year of studying music and our relationship became strained from the pressure we both were under. I wanted to travel; he didn't. I needed to leave campus to do a six-month internship; he needed to stay.

Our youth and naivete obscured our vision of a future. It seemed we were suddenly pursuing different goals. I handed him the beautiful sparkly engagement ring and we went our separate ways. Actually I threw the ring but he caught it. We married other people within 18 months of our goodbye that night in my apartment.

Twenty years ago I found his email address on an alumni website. I wrote to him, providing details of my life in Florida and he wrote back, providing details of his life in the Northeast. I was somewhat surprised that he answered the email. Maybe he was seeking closure; I know that I was. I saved his email, although I have destroyed every letter he wrote me during our three years together. It's better this way.

I would prefer that my son and daughter not be privy to these flaming red hot missives of young love when I am gone.